

## **Help! My Birds are Sick!**

If your flock is showing signs of respiratory disease, how can you best discover the cause? Birds with respiratory disease may be coughing, snicking, or breathing with open mouths, depending on the severity of their illness. You may also notice swelling around their eyes. They may have dirty upper wing feathers from wiping respiratory secretions off on their feathers, and may appear ruffled and tend to huddle together. Layers often show a drop in egg production.

The North Carolina Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services offers diagnostic services for domestic and backyard fowl at any one of five Animal Disease Diagnostic Laboratories around the state. These labs are located in Arden, Elkin, Monroe, Rose Hill and Raleigh. Each lab employs Veterinarians trained in the diagnosis of avian disease. These laboratories are described on the website [www.ncvdl.com](http://www.ncvdl.com). There you will find the locations, phone numbers, and driving directions to each laboratory. All labs are open from 8:00 AM until 5:00 PM, Monday through Friday. If you have an emergency outside those hours or on holidays, contact the lab closest to you to arrange submissions.

Veterinary diagnostic staff prefers submissions of live birds showing signs of the illness you have noticed. Please be aware that birds you submit will be humanely euthanized before examination. If you cannot submit live birds, freshly dead birds (12 hours or less) can be examined. If there is a delay in getting to the laboratory, please refrigerate your dead birds in order to preserve their tissues for examination. Veterinarians will examine each bird submitted for signs of disease and take samples for testing for suspected disease agents. Some test results may not be immediately available, but you will receive a complete report about the birds that you submit. The only cost to North Carolina residents is a \$5.00 diagnostic work-up fee, which includes disposal of the birds.

Though the laboratories do not accept submission of wild birds, any domestic fowl from small independent flocks, pets or exhibition birds are welcome. We hope you will make use of your state diagnostic laboratory system for diagnosis of any disease problem you encounter in your flock.